

BIRD SIGHTINGS

OCTOBER 1996

SUMMARY



by Richard A. Forster, Marjorie W. Rines, and Robert H. Stymeist

October 1996 will be remembered for the record rain, a total of 10.66 inches, 7.36 inches above normal. This broke the previous October record of 8.84 inches set in 1877. The 6.66 inches of rain that fell in the 24-hour period between October 20 and 21 was the second greatest single day total since Hurricane Diane in August of 1955, which dumped 8.4 inches. Damage due to flooding swept the region. The temperature during October averaged 53.4°, 1.4° below normal. The high was 73° on October 14 and 17, and the low was 36° on October 4. The remnants of Hurricane Josephine brought a peak gust of 59 mph from the northeast on October 9. Greater Boston has its first frozen precipitation of the season with a trace of sleet in the early morning hours of October 30.

R. H. S.

LOONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

For the second month in a row storms played a major part in determining the presence of pelagic species. Surprisingly, these storms brought very few Leach's Storm-Petrels close to shore, but shearwaters were well represented at both Andrew's Point in Rockport and First Encounter Beach in Eastham on the 9th and the 21st. An impressive 45 Northern Fulmars were recorded in Eastham on the 9th. Also present in appreciable numbers during these storms were Red-throated Loons, Northern Gannets and migrating Scoters. Other interesting sightings during the month included an Eared Grebe that was present in Gloucester beginning in midmonth, and at least seven of the eight American White Pelicans discovered in Hyannis in late September continued for most of October. Heron reports included a scattering of American Bitterns and two reports of Least Bittern, including one that was forced out of a salt marsh at high tide. The "Great White" Heron discovered in Eastham in midsummer was last seen at midmonth. The last of the herons gradually departed by the end of the month and included three rather late Tricolored Herons and a single Glossy Ibis.

What may have been the best ever coastal fall flight of Snow Geese occurred on the 5th. Included among the numerous flocks was a very small white goose that the observer thought was a Ross' Goose. Written documentation was provided by the observer, and if accepted by the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, this would represent the first sighting of this species in the state. Other waterfowl reports were routine with counts of freshwater ducks greatest at their typical South Monomoy stronghold. A Tufted Duck appeared in Sterling where it was present last fall. Canvasbacks and especially Redheads were sparsely reported. The vanguard of Harlequin Ducks arrived by month's end. Ruddy and Ring-necked ducks were widely reported, but the numbers of Ring-necks in Lakeville were well below expected totals.

Raptor reports were either as expected or below normal. Only a few late Ospreys were observed and there were only two reports of Bald Eagle. A Golden Eagle graced Martha's Vineyard while only a single Rough-legged Hawk was reported. A large falcon noted in Wayland was thought to be a Gyrfalcon. The few Common Moorhens observed were at typical locations, but two Purple Gallinules, both immatures, were decidedly unusual. One was a carryover from September in Marblehead and the other appeared in Rockport. Both remained only briefly. American Coot were rather widely distributed in small numbers. There was only one report of a Sandhill Crane.

Shorebird sightings followed the usual pattern, with a scattering of late migrating juveniles along with appreciable numbers of typical late season migrants. A very unusual sighting, both in terms of its rarity and location, was a Bar-tailed Godwit in South Boston. A well-described juvenile was seen briefly in association with Black-bellied Plovers during a storm. American Golden-Plover was widely reported in small numbers. There were better than average reports of late Solitary Sandpipers. Western Sandpipers were scarce, but White-rumped Sandpipers were well reported, as were Pectoral Sandpipers. The best count of Long-billed Dowitchers for the entire season occurred in late October at Plum Island. Considering the

wealth of pelagic birds reported during storms, there were surprisingly few phalaropes of either species observed.

Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers were both reported at the same time and locations, with Pomarine outnumbering Parasitic. A **Mew Gull** in first winter plumage was carefully studied at Martha's Vineyard. Only two Little Gulls were seen, and there were scattered reports of Black-headed and Lesser Black-backed gulls. Reports of Glaucous and Iceland gulls were a bit on the early side. An excellent flight of Black-legged Kittiwakes occurred at Rockport during the storm of the 21st. The usual few fall migrant Caspian Terns were reported, all on the same day! The few reports of Forster's Tern reinforced that it was a poor year for them. The scattered early alcid reports were typical for the season.

The outstanding event of the month was the small influx of **Boreal Owls** during the last week of the month. Three different individuals were observed, beginning on the 23rd. Of these, only an individual appearing outside a school in Newton on Halloween day was able to be seen by more than one or two observers. In the past 50 years, this diminutive northern owl has been rarely reported after a series of irruptions in the late 1800's and early 1900's. The only previous irruption during recent years occurred just five years ago, when six individuals were located. The timing of that movement was similar to this month's movement. Perhaps more will eventually turn up. Otherwise few other species of owls were noted. Two Snowy Owls appeared at the end of the month, but only three Northern Saw-whet and a single Short-eared owl were reported. Only two migrant Red-headed Woodpeckers were noted in addition to lingering residents in Sherborn. A frontal passage on the 4th ushered in Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, including a nice count of 10 at Plum Island.

R. A. F.

Date	Location	Number	Observers	Date	Location	Number	Observers
Red-throated Loon							
13	Tuckernuck	5	T. Maloney#	26	Stellwagen	1	C. Floyd
20	Barnstable (S.N.)	25	S. Arena	14	Gay Head	6	A. Keith#
21	Rockport (H.P.)	206	R. Heil	Greater Shearwater			
27	Duxbury/Plymouth	60	W. Petersen#	9	Eastham (F.E.)	800	R. Heil
27	P.I.	105 migr	S. Perkins#	21	Rockport (A.P.)	75	R. Heil
Common Loon							
5	S. Peabody	28 migr	R. Heil	Sooty Shearwater			
6	Lakeville	5	W. Petersen	9	Eastham (F.E.)	12	R. Heil
10	Wach. Res.	40	E. Salmea	19	Rockport	2	G. d'Entremont#
12-13	Tuckernuck	23	S. Perkins#	26	Stellwagen	50	C. Floyd
18	Marshfield	16	D. Clapp	Manx Shearwater			
19	Rockport	25	G. d'Entremont#	9	Eastham (F.E.)	17	R. Heil
20	Barnstable (S.N.)	18	S. Arena	14	Gay Head	1	A. Keith#
21	Provincetown	22	S. Perkins#	21	Rockport (A.P.)	1	R. Heil
21	Rockport (A.P.)	55	R. Heil	26	Stellwagen	12	C. Floyd
30	P.I.	20	C. Ralph	Leach's Storm-Petrel			
Pied-billed Grebe							
12	S. Monomoy	8	W. Petersen#	5	Provincetown (R.P.)	1	G. d'Entremont
12	Tuckernuck	4	T. Maloney#	20	Oak Bluffs	2	V. Laux#
14, 27	Lakeville	14, 28	S. Arena	21	Eastham (F.E.)	1	S. Perkins#
14	Gloucester	8	M. Lynch#	21	Rockport (A.P.)	7	R. Heil
16	GMNWR	13	R. Stymeist	Northern Gannet			
thr	Reports of 1 or 2 indiv. from 13 loc.			4	P.I.	225	R. Heil
Horned Grebe							
6	Lakeville	2	W. Petersen	5	Rockport (H.P.)	250	S. Perkins#
26	Plymouth B.	20	R. Finch	9	Eastham (F.E.)	900+	R. Heil
27	Lakeville	16	S. Arena	20	Manomet	515	G. d'Entremont
27	E. Gloucester	6	J. Berry	20	Barnstable (S.N.)	5500	S. Arena
Red-necked Grebe							
10	Wach. Res.	1	E. Salmea	20	Rockport (A.P.)	3000	J. Smith
19	Gloucester H.	12	M. Lynch#	21	Provincetown	650	S. Perkins#
20	Manomet	3	G. d'Entremont	American White Pelican			
21	Rockport (A.P.)	3	R. Heil	4-26	Hyannis	7 max 10/04	S. Clifton + v.o.
24	Dennis	8	S. + E. Miller	Great Cormorant			
26	Plymouth B.	3	R. Finch	11	Nantucket	1 imm	S. Perkins#
30	Camb. (F.P.)	2	J. Barton	19	Rockport	3	G. d'Entremont#
30	Boston	1	H. Miller	20	Manomet	5	G. d'Entremont
Eared Grebe							
16-31	Gloucester	1	J. Soucy + v.o.	27	P.I.	1	S. Perkins#
Northern Fulmar							
9	Eastham (F.E.)	45	R. Heil	Double-crested Cormorant			
21	Rockport (A.P.)	2	R. Heil	5	S. Peabody	1400 migr	R. Heil
21	Provincetown	2	S. Perkins#	12	Salem	240 BBC (I. Lynch)	
				12	P.I.	550 BBC (B. Wicks)	
				13	Tuckernuck	200+	R. Veit#
				14	Ipswich	3300 migr	J. Berry
				American Bittern			
				4, 31	S. Dart. (A.Pd)	2, 1	LCES (J. Hill)
				8	Mashpee	1	S. + E. Miller

19	Rockport (H.P.)	1 ad	M. Lynch#	5	Barnstable	2	G. d'Entremont#
20	Katama	2	V. Laux#	13	Marshfield	1	D. Clapp
20	Gloucester	1	fide J. Soucy	16	Maynard	2	L. Nachtrab
27	Lynn	1	J. Quigley	22	Newton	1	H. Miller
	Glaucous Gull			23	Melrose	1	D. + I. Jewell
23	Newburyport	1 1W	R. Heil	Snowy Owl			
	Black-legged Kittiwake			26	Logan	1	N. Smith
9	Eastham (F.E.)	24	R. Heil	29	Duxbury	1	N. Smith
21	Rockport (A.P.)	4260	R. Heil	Barred Owl			
21	Provincetown	76	S. Perkins#	6	Wayland	2	M. Pelikan
	Caspian Tern			24	Weston	1	D. Lange#
5	N. Monomoy	2	B. Nikula	Short-eared Owl			
5	Chilmark	4	V. Laux#	10	N. Monomoy	1	J. Sones#
5	Edgartown	2	C. Floyd	Boreal Owl			
5	Westport	1	M. Lynch#	23	Weston	1	D. Morimoto#
Common Tern	P.I.	1	S. Perkins#	26	MNWS	1	J. Smith
3	S. Dart. (A.P.)	50	S. Perkins#	31	Newton	1 ph	K. Sheppard + v.o.
9	Eastham (F.E.)	1130	R. Heil	Northern Saw-whet Owl			
21	Provincetown	225	S. Perkins#	9	Brookline	1	H. Wiggins#
25	Plymouth	2	W. Petersen#	27	Wayland	1	J. Wood
26	Stellwagen	200+	C. Floyd	27	Weston	1	D. Lange#
Forster's Tern				Common Nighthawk			
3	Newburyport	1	S. Perkins#	7	Mt.A.	1	J. Heywood
5	Westport	1	M. Lynch#	Chimney Swift			
6	S. Dart. (A.P.)	2	S. Perkins#	2	W. Newbury	1	BBC (S. Grinley)
9	Eastham (F.E.)	2	R. Heil	Hummingbird species			
25	Plymouth	1	W. Petersen#	4	P.I.	1	R. Heil
Razorbill				Belted Kingfisher			
21	Rockport (A.P.)	16	R. Heil	12	Wachusett Res.	4	M. Lynch#
21	Provincetown	5	S. Perkins#	Red-headed Woodpecker			
Black Guillemot				1-31	Sherborn	2 ad	E. Taylor
18	Gloucester	1	M. Rines	12	Northboro	1 imm	S. Arena
Yellow-billed Cuckoo				23	Wayland	1	R. Forster#
23	Dorchester	1	R. Donovan	Red-bellied Woodpecker			
25	Nantucket	1	fide E. Ray	18	Northboro	2	A. Boover
Barn Owl	M.V.	2	SSBC (D. Clapp)	21	Concord	2	R. Lockwood
13				thr	Reports of individuals from 9 loc.		
Eastern Screech-Owl				Yellow-bellied Sapsucker			
5	Scituate	1	W. Petersen	4	Marblehead	2	D. Chickering
13	Marshfield	1	D. Clapp	4	P.I.	10	R. Heil
24	Ipswich	1	J. Berry	17	Boxford	2	K. Disney
26	MNWS	1	J. Smith#	thr	Reports of individuals from 11 loc.		
27	Rockport (H.P.)	1	S. Perkins#	Pileated Woodpecker			
29	Stoneham	1	D. + I. Jewell	5	Boxford	1	D. + I. Jewell
6	S. Plymouth	2	S. Arena	24	Warren	1	M. Lynch#
Great Horned Owl				26	Pepperell	1	E. Stromsted
1-31	Ipswich	4 max	J. Berry	6	Lincoln	1	R. Lockwood

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH GROSBEAKS

Only one Western Kingbird was reported, although the report of a very late Eastern Kingbird on October 22 on Nantucket was probably more unusual. Large flocks of Tree Swallows lingered through midmonth, especially on Cape Cod and the Island, where numbers reached in the thousands. Late reports of Northern Rough-winged and Barn swallows are becoming regular from the Sudbury River Valley. A Sedge Wren, carefully studied in the Neponset Marsh in Dorchester, was only one of a series of interesting reports from this area in October. Both species of kinglet began moving in earnest during the month.

Last year in October we were already seeing signs of a major invasion of Northern Shrikes, but the single October report this year suggests we are not in for any similar invasion. Twenty-nine species of warbler were reported, with the highlight being a MacGillivray's Warbler carefully studied at close range for 20 minutes in West Newbury. Other less common warbler sightings included 13 Orange-crowned, 1 Worm-eating, 1 Hooded and 11 reports of Yellow-breasted Chat.

It was a good October for the seed eaters, with four Blue Grosbeaks, four Dickcissels, thirteen Clay-colored Sparrows, two Lark Sparrows and good numbers of Lincoln's Sparrows tallied. The splitters were busy identifying both Saltmarsh and Nelson's Sharp-tailed sparrows, but could only find the usual Baltimore Oriole. The winter finch flight was not promising, with just a scattering of reports of Pine Siskins, mostly single individuals.

R. H. S.

?Dark-eyed Junco				9	DWWS	7	D. Clapp
4	P.I.	18	R. Heil	12	Sterling	30	M. Lynch#
5	Rockport (H.P.)	10	S. Perkins#	12	Bedford	3	M. Rines
26	Medford	41	M. Rines	14	Boxford	3-4	J. Brown#
26	Mt.A.	95	R. Stymeist	23	Lexington	50	M. Rines
Lapland Longspur				25	Newton	3	H. Miller
13, 21	Katama	6, 6	V. Laux#	25	Weston	15	M. Rines#
5	Rockport (H.P.)	1	S. Perkins#	26	Pepperell	3	E. Stromsted
12	P.I.	9	R. Forster	26	Framingham	15	S. Perkins#
21-26	Dorchester	2	R. Donovan	27	Middleboro	20	S. Arena
Snow Bunting				Common Grackle			
11	Quincy	3	N. Smith	22	Marshfield	1600	D. Furbish
17	Dorchester	1	R. Donovan	25	Worc. (BMB)	400	M. Lynch#
19	Gloucester	1	M. Lynch#	25	Hanson	7000	W. Petersen
25	Nantucket	1	fide E. Ray	Brown-headed Cowbird			
27	P.I.	35	J. Center	5	Rowley	200	R. Heil
27	Rockport (H.P.)	6	S. Perkins#	12	Cumb. Farms	1100	M. Emmons
29	Logan	1000+	N. Smith	24	Acton	150	R. Forster
30	Salisbury	70	C. Ralph	27	Westport	450	M. Lynch#
31	Dennis	20	S. + E. Miller	Baltimore Oriole			
Bobolink				1	Concord (NAC)	1	S. Perkins
1	Concord (NAC)	12	S. Perkins	5	Truro	1	G. d'Entremont#
2	Nantucket	4	J. Hoye#	5	WBWS	1	G. d'Entremont#
4	Newbury	16	R. Heil	5	P.I.	1	R. Lockwood
6	Sandwich	8	G. d'Entremont#	5	Belmont	1	M. Pelikan
6	Barnstable	8	G. d'Entremont#	6	Barnstable	1	D. Brown
6	Concord (NAC)	30	M. Pelikan	12-13	Tuckernuck	7	S. Perkins#
11	Eastham (F.H.)	5	S. Arena	14	Truro	2	B. Parker
14	Cumb. Farms	11	S. Arena	28	Cummaquid	2	S. + E. Miller
23	Newburyport	1	R. Heil	Purple Finch			
27	Truro	1	G. d'Entremont#	16,23	Newton	1	H. Miller
27	Eastham (F. H.)	1	G. d'Entremont#	5	Truro	2	G. d'Entremont#
Red-winged Blackbird				6	Barnstable	3	G. d'Entremont#
6	Barnstable	80	G. d'Entremont#	26	Mt. A.	2	R. Stymeist
19	P.I.	160	P. + F. Vale	26	Truro	1	B. Parker
25	Worc. (BMB)	240	M. Lynch#	27	Wayland	1	M. Pelikan
Eastern Meadowlark				27	Lakeville	5	S. Arena
12	Middleboro (CF)	40	M. Emmons	30	P.I.	2	C. Ralph
12	S. Monomoy	2	W. Petersen#	30	Northboro	5	B. Volkle
14	Cumb. Farms	45	S. Arena	31	Saugus	2	P. Duffy
14	Truro	10	B. Parker	Pine Siskin			
26	Dorchester	2	R. Donovan	17	GMNWR	1	S. Perkins#
27	Eastham (F.H.)	3	G. d'Entremont#	20	P.I.	1	R. Lockwood
27	Wayland	2	M. Pelikan	25	Waltham	1	M. Rines
Rusty Blackbird				26	MNWS	1	J. Smith
7	Stow	50	fide B. Volkle	26	Ipswich	40	J. Berry
				26	Mt.A.	3	R. Stymeist

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE BIRD SIGHTINGS TO BIRD OBSERVER

This publication prints monthly compilations of reports of birds seen in the ten counties of eastern Massachusetts (Worcester County and east) and offshore waters. Space does not permit the inclusion of all material submitted. However, bird sightings sent to *Bird Observer* are archived at the Massachusetts Audubon Society. Our compilers select and summarize for publication sightings that provide a snapshot of birdlife during the reporting period. These sightings include early and late dates for migratory species, maximum counts of migrants and some common birds, and species found beyond their normal ranges.

Sightings for any given month must be reported in writing by the eighth of the following month. Send to Bird Sightings, Robert H. Stymeist, 94 Grove Street, Watertown, MA 02172. Please organize reports by month and by species in current A.O.U. checklist order. Include name and phone number of observer, common name of species, date of sighting, location, number of birds, number of observers, and information relevant to age, sex, morph, etc.

Reports of difficult identifications, vagrants, rarities, or species unusual as to place, time, or prior nesting activity in Massachusetts also should be reported promptly to the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee, c/o Wayne Petersen, Massachusetts Audubon Society, South Great Road, Lincoln, MA 01773.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ad	adult	H.	Harbor
alt	alternate	I.	Island
b	banded	L.	Ledge
br	breeding	M.V.	Martha's Vineyard
dk	dark (phase)	Mt.A.	Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge
f	female	Nant.	Nantucket
fl	fledged	Newbypt	Newburyport
imm	immature	P.I.	Plum Island
ind	individuals	Pd	Pond
juv	juvenile	P'town	Provincetown
loc	location	Quab.	Quabbin
lt	light (phase)	Res.	Reservoir
m	male	R.P.	Race Point, Provincetown
max	maximum	S.B.	South Beach, Chatham
mi	mile	S. Dart.	South Dartmouth
migr	migrating	S.F.	State Forest
n	nesting	S.N.	Sandy Neck, Barnstable
ph	photographed	S.P.	State Park
pl	plumage	Stellw.	Stellwagen Bank
pr	pair	Worc.	Worcester
S	summer (1S = first summer)	BBC	Brookline Bird Club
thr	throughout	BBS	Breeding Bird Survey
v.o.	various observers	BMB	Broad Meadow Brook, Worcester
W	winter (2W = second winter)	CBC	Christmas Bird Count
w/	with	CCBC	Cape Cod Bird Club
yg	young	DFWS	Drumlin Farm Wildlife Sanctuary
#	additional observers	DWWS	Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary
A.A.	Arnold Arboretum	EMHW	Eastern Massachusetts Hawk Watch
A.P.	Andrews Point, Rockport	GMNWR	Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge
A.Pd	Allens Pond, S. Dartmouth	HRWMA	High Ridge Wildlife Management Area, Gardner-Westminster
Arl.	Arlington	IRWS	Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary
B.	Beach	LCES	Lloyd Center for Environmental Studies
B.I.	Belle Isle, E. Boston	MARC	Massachusetts Avian Records Committee
B.R.	Bass Rocks, Gloucester	MAS	Massachusetts Audubon Society
Buzz.	Buzzards Bay	MBO	Manomet Observatory
Cambr.	Cambridge	MBWMA	Martin Burns Wildlife Management Area, Newbury
C.B.	Crane Beach, Ipswich	MDFW	MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
Corp. B.	Corporation Beach, Dennis	MNWS	Marblehead Neck Wildlife Sanctuary
C.P.	Crooked Pond, Boxford	MSSF	Myles Standish State Forest
Cumb. Farms	Cumberland Farms, Middleboro-Halifax	NAC	Nine Acre Corner, Concord
E.P.	Eastern Point, Gloucester	NBC	Needham Bird Club
F.E.	First Encounter Beach, Eastham	NEHW	New England Hawk Watch
F.H.	Fort Hill, Eastham	ONWR	Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge
F.M.	Fowl Meadow	SRV	Sudbury River Valley
F.P.	Fresh Pond, Cambridge	SSBC	South Shore Bird Club
F.Pk	Franklin Park, Boston	TASL	Take A Second Look Harbor Census
G40	Gate 40, Quabbin	USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
G45	Gate 45, Quabbin	WBWS	Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary
H.P.	Halibut Point, Rockport	WMWS	Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary